



Family Resource Centers Annual Report

“Tennessee’s Best Kept Secret”

Tennessee Department of Education | November 2020



A Welcome Message from Tennessee Education Commissioner, Dr. Penny Schwinn



Our Family Resource Centers (FRC) provide a vital service to the students and families of this state. These centers and their dedicated staff help connect families to critical resources in the community and ensure students have the supports they need to come to school ready to learn. But over the past year, our FRCs have played an even more important role as families grappled with the effects of devastating tornadoes and the COVID-19 pandemic. As you will see in this report, through both concrete outcomes and district spotlights, FRCs have stepped up to the challenges of 2020 by finding new and innovative ways to meet the increasing needs of families across the state. For example, through a partnership with first lady Maria Lee's office, our FRC's are using a free app called *Purposity* to engage Tennesseans from across the state

in fulfilling student needs. I had the opportunity to witness this work firsthand and am excited about the ongoing impact of this project. I am so grateful for our FRCs and am proud to present an update on their important work in this report.

Best,

Penny

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Overview

Many of Tennessee's students face obstacles—poverty, hunger, homelessness, abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, or family conflict—which threaten their ability to learn. While schools are not structured to solicit resources to address the challenges that threaten the basic needs of many families, Family Resource Centers (FRCs) do have this ability. FRCs engage local businesses and community organizations to play significant roles in addressing the debilitating problems faced by students and their families. Services and resources beyond the typical scope of the school district have been rallied through unique community partnerships created by FRCs.

Recognizing the barriers to school success facing many students, the General Assembly adopted T.C.A. § 49-2-115, giving FRCs the power to: "maximize the potential learning capacity of the child by ensuring that school environments and neighborhoods are safe and socially enriching, that families are strong and able to protect children and meet their basic needs, and that children are physically healthy, emotionally stable, socially well-adjusted, and able to connect with enriching opportunities and experiences in their schools and communities. To enable children to attain the most benefit possible from the time they spend in educational settings, the family resource centers shall focus on providing information to families about resources, support, and benefits available in the community and on developing a coordinated system of care for children in the community to effectuate this purpose."

Funding

T.C.A. § 49-2-115 authorizes the development of school-administered FRCs; however, school revenue constraints have restricted districts from developing FRCs without funding assistance. In the 2019-2020 school year, the department allocated \$3.05 million to fund 102 FRCs in 79 districts serving over 114,000 students and 76,000 families. Each FRC site receives an annual fixed award of \$29,611.65. The district is required to provide a minimum match of \$20,388.35.

FRC guidelines require each FRC to collaborate with community partners in the planning, development, and support of a coordinated service delivery to strengthen families' ability to support the academic and life success of children. In the 2019-2020 school year, FRCs collaborated with 2,261 community partners. Through these collaborations, FRCs were able to secure goods and services, donations, and grants in the amount of more than \$12 million, tripling the department's investment.

Goals and Evaluation

FRCs share a unified goal: to assist families through information and training. Additionally, FRCs help families learn to resolve problems through the collaborative efforts of many disciplines within the community—educational, mental and physical health, business, and social services. The programs

respect the strengths of families and build on them rather than focus on their weaknesses. FRC goals, objectives, and strategies fall within one or more of the following domains:

- Attendance and Truancy
- Collaboration and Partnerships
- Behavioral Health and Social Personal Learning
- Family Support
- Family Training and Education
- Family Engagement
- Academic Support

The goals established by each FRC, and the diverse strategies implemented to attain those goals, yielded significant increases in student attendance rates and academic progress with details throughout the report.

More tangibly, FRCs are required to annually submit SMART (i.e., specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely) goals for at least three of the seven domains listed above. Additionally, FRCs are required to provide an evaluation of their progress and outcomes toward each goal to the department each May.

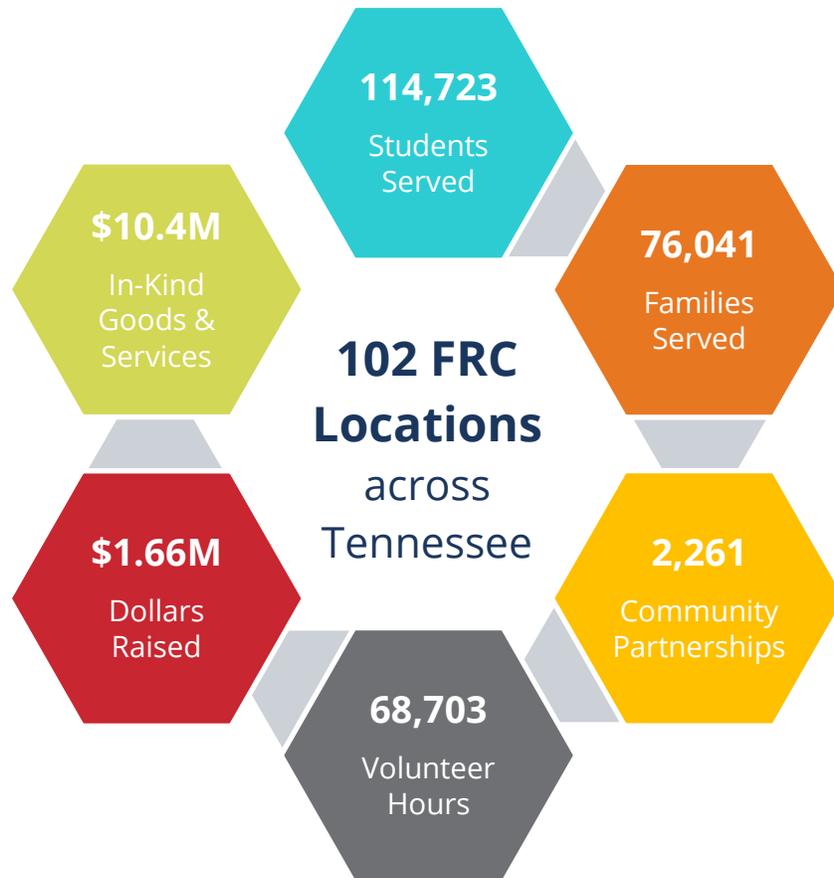
Operational Organization

The FRC director is responsible for the overall operation of the programs, services, and activities of the FRC. The director also leads the supervision of staff, interns, and/or volunteers assisting with day-to-day operations. They are strategic in their approach to ensure measurable goals are established to direct the operation of the FRC. The goals are related to needs and challenges that are identified by the FRC advisory council and endorsed by the district.

Each FRC is required to have an advisory council that assists the FRC director in setting program and service priorities each year. Typical advisory councils are composed of parents who are potential consumers, representatives of state agencies that serve children and families, local non-profit social service organizations, philanthropic groups, and family support service providers whose focus is service provision within the community served by the FRC. FRC advisory councils operate with the authority and responsibility to develop and maintain a needs-based plan of operation relevant to the schools and community it serves.

2019-2020 Impact Summary

Since 1993, FRCs have connected families with a coordinated, accessible system of services to strengthen families' abilities to support academic and life success of all children.



Key Metrics

FUNDING: FRCs unlocked an additional \$1.66M in funding and received \$10.4M in donated goods and services, or in-kind contributions. These are critical to reaching additional students and their families.

RESOURCES: FRCs offered more than 50 different services and supports to families:

- 96% of FRCs provided a food bank
- 92% issued backpacks to students

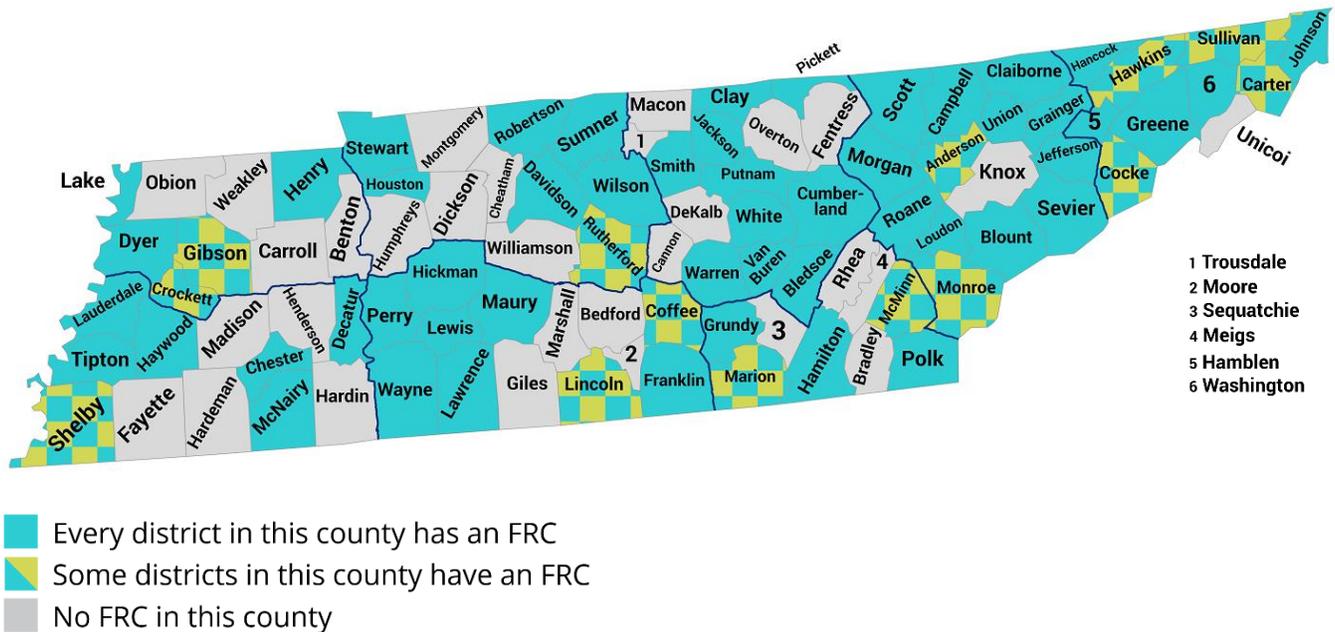
- 91% supplied a clothing bank
- 89% offered help on truancy and attendance
- 88% provided housing assistance

TRAINING: More than 50 different services and training topics were given to families:

- 72% of FRCs provided a parenting skills training
- 68% offered family literacy training
- 58% delivered job readiness and job training programs

FRC Locations in Tennessee

FRCs operate in 102 locations across the state. Contact information for each FRC is included in Appendix A and a printable version of this map is included in Appendix B.



Wilson County & Lebanon SSD

On March 3, 2020, a tornado hit Middle Tennessee, destroying two Wilson County schools and impacting more than 500 families. The Wilson County FRC and Lebanon Special School District FRC coordinated an immediate response. Monetary and product donations poured in to support tornado-impacted families, including a \$30,000 grant from The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. When the FRCs used a mobile food pantry to collect donations, cars lined up with trunks full of food. They received over \$10,000 in donated food and necessities on the first day alone. The estimated value of the cumulative 13,360 community volunteer hours and donations collected throughout the summer totaled \$1 million.



“ *A mindset transition from quarantine to what we call “care-antine” occurred after COVID-19 restrictions were put in place. For some children, school is a place they know they will be fed and will have a bond with a nurturing adult. Because we knew our children and families would have food insecurity and other needs while they were not at school, we visited homes—following guidelines—to deliver needed items, created summer activity kits for children, and contacted families via telephone and text to determine needs.* ”

–FRC Directors Anne Barger, Wilson County and Beth Petty, Lebanon SSD (pictured, left)



2019-2020 Special Section Extended Closures: Tornado Relief & COVID-19

Putnam County School District

The Putnam County School District worked alongside the county's Emergency Operations Center to respond to the E4 tornado that devastated much of the area. The school district's Office of Student Services received a \$25,000 donation to assist in placing and covering the needs of over 430 affected families and thousands of volunteer hours were documented county-wide.

On the heels of the tornado and still in the throes of relief efforts, the schools that had not been damaged then had to close in response to COVID-19—leaving children and families in desperate need of resources. Putnam County FRC set up feeding sites for breakfast and lunch. Additionally, FRC staff made home deliveries of food and toiletries. Temporary housing and transportation services were also arranged for families. FRC directors even assisted filling out benefits paperwork for those who experienced a loss of income and/or housing.

School Closures by the Numbers:

112,270 Families
Served

\$4.5M Contributions
& In-Kind

52,647 Volunteer
Hours

Metro Nashville

A Latinx family received food support from Maplewood High School during the COVID-19 crisis and wrote the following note of gratitude to the FRC director. *"Hola buenas tardes muchas gracias x la caja ya me llevo muchísimas gracia que Dios los bendiga usted es la única que nos a mandado nadie nos havia dado ninguna ayuda."* (English translation below courtesy of Ana Selby, MHS translator)

"Hello, good afternoon. Thank you very much for the box I had arrived. Thank you very much. God bless you. You are the only one who has sent us (anything) no one (else) has given us any help."

Program Outcomes

Attendance and Truancy

For many years, educators focused on attendance chiefly in secondary school, viewing truancy or unexcused absences as an indicator of student disengagement and eventual dropout. This changed in 2008 when the National Center for Children in Poverty published *Present, Engaged and Accounted For*¹, a report detailing the extent of absenteeism—for excused and unexcused reasons—in the elementary grades. In the report, Hedy Chang and Mariajosé Romero used data from a nationally representative data set to document that 1 in 10 kindergarten and first grade students miss at least 10 percent of the school year.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Campbell County's** Jellico Elementary FRC decreased chronic absenteeism by nearly 15 percent in seven months.
- **Jefferson County** improved average daily attendance by approximately 70 students.



Story From the Field: Dyersburg City Schools

As part of their 2019–2020 goal setting process, Dyersburg City FRC set a goal to improve attendance and grades for 50 percent of students with active truancy cases. These students had missed more than 10 percent of academic days (about 18 days). Due in part to the collaborative efforts of the FRC, **90 percent of students showed improved attendance and 78 percent demonstrated academic improvement** at the end of the school year.

Ruthene Ezell, Dyersburg City Schools Family Resource Director (pictured, left)

¹ (Chang & Romero, 2008)

Collaboration and Partnerships

One third of FRCs set a goal to improve collaboration and partnerships which resulted in the development of nearly 2,300 partnerships between schools, community stakeholders, and state agencies to more effectively serve children and their families.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Clay County** increased their collaboration partnerships by 7 percent to support their Christmas assistance and basic necessities support to students and families.
- **Johnson County's** "Loads of Laundry" program experienced increased demand for laundry and toiletry assistance; by exceeding its fundraising goal by 150 percent, provision of monthly laundry access was able to be offered to families.
- **Maryville City School's** FRC Director, Deb Skyler, was recognized as Maryville College's 2020 Community Partner of the year for their work developing a mentoring program between 25 college students and 25 children served by the FRC.



Story From the Field: Maryville City Schools

"Many families in our school community who have faced difficult times are familiar with the work of our Family Resource Center and its director, Deb Skyler. Without the dedicated staff and volunteers in the FRC, many needs would go unmet. We are very proud of the work Deb, her staff, and many volunteers do to serve Maryville families and appreciate this community recognition of their efforts."

Maryville City Schools' Director of Schools, Dr. Mike Winstead (pictured, left)

Behavioral Health & Social Personal Learning

Childhood and adolescence are important times for social and personal development. School plays a crucial role in fostering student well-being. Research shows social and personal learning not only improves achievement by an average of 11 percentile points, but it also increases pro-social behaviors (e.g., kindness, sharing, and empathy), improves student attitudes toward school, and reduces depression and stress among students².

FRCs provide a variety of programs and services to meet the social and personal needs of students and their families. These may include case management services, life skills sessions, school-based mental health services, and early intervention programs.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Roane County** piloted a model empathy intervention program which led to a 45 percent reduction in out of classroom behavioral referrals.
- **Oak Ridge City Schools'** FRC increased access to school-based mental health by 48 percent by adding a full-time school-based therapist, and saw improvements in student social growth, attendance, and decreased negative behaviors.
- **Oneida Public Schools'** FRC Director, Dr. Melinda McCartt, secured over \$150,000 in grants—including funding from Building Better Brains for their Project Positive Brain Change initiative which provided, among other resources, a social worker within each school. Increased outreach and support to families enabled the FRC to distribute an additional \$12,000 in food and basic necessities during the COVID-19 shut down.

² (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011)

Family Support

Committed to the success of all students, FRCs work to alleviate these barriers to student success through a myriad of services and resources that include weekend food backpacks, school supplies, clothing, hygiene items, eye exams, dental care, assistance with rent and utilities, and summer feeding programs.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Shelby County Schools'** Douglass High School exceeded their goal by over 100 percent to refer more families and students to receive basic needs—ultimately impacting more than 400 families.
- **Metro Nashville's** Pearl-Cohn High School provided 3,350 family support services, representing a 104 percent increase from the previous year. The dramatic increase in family needs can be attributed to COVID-19 and tornado relief efforts.



Above: Tennessee Education Commissioner, Dr. Penny Schwinn, packs produce at a Manchester City Schools mobile food pantry during the extended closure in April

Family Training and Education

Operating under the premise that parents and families are a child’s first teacher, FRCs offer opportunities for families to strengthen their parent support network, build their skills in effective parenting, and learn how to support their child academically.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Robertson County** conducted a needs assessment to be more responsive to families and increased the number of families participating in FRC workshops and other family trainings by 77 percent.
- **Oak Ridge City’s** Willow Brook Elementary experienced record attendance for a new family welcome event with 65 percent of all new families attending. They are now creating virtual connection opportunities to keep families engaged.
- **Franklin County’s** targeted outreach efforts resulted in increasing parenting class enrollment by an additional 21 families compared to the previous year.



Spotlight on Training and Resources

Every FRC creates trainings and programs to fit the needs of their community and positively impact students’ academic achievement and families’ ability to thrive at the school. The percentage of FRCs offering trainings or resources during the 2019-2020 school year include:

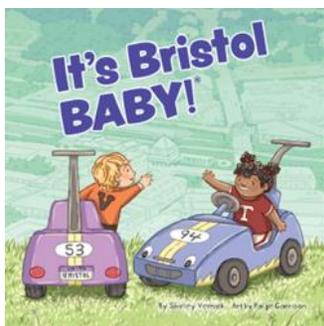
- 76%: health resources
- 72%: parenting skills trainings
- 67%: conflict resolution & peer mediation
- 57%: health fairs
- 34%: “Parents as Teachers” curriculum

Family Engagement

FRCs offer active school engagement opportunities to families through a variety of activities and programs. Literacy programs, home visits, interpreter services, parent nights, and parent resource fairs provide caregivers additional ways to help students succeed academically and ensure out-of-school activities are constructive.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Loudon County** established this priority area as part of their goal setting process and increased the number of family engagements via the FRC by 1,600 compared to the year prior.
- **Lewis County** created a “Donuts with Dads” program focused on increasing the knowledge and understanding of participants’ role as a father or father figure. After evaluations, 90 percent of participants felt an increase in both knowledge and understanding.
- **Hamblen County** increased English Language Learner (ELL) family engagement by 75 percent over the last school year, reaching 80 additional ELL students through increased interpretive services.



Story from the Field: Bristol City Schools

The Bristol City Schools FRC team was a key collective impact partner in the development of “It’s Bristol BABY!,” the children’s book titled after Bristol Motor Speedway’s famous NASCAR cry. A partnership with the local hospital ensures books are distributed to newborn families. From spotting the caterpillar on each layout to the more advanced activities on the final pages of the book, “It’s Bristol BABY!” is intended to be a family’s first tool of engagement across their community with the shared goal of reading on grade level by the third grade.

Academic Support

Academic support refers to a wide variety of instructional methods, educational services, or school resources provided to students to help them catch up with their peers, meet learning standards, or generally succeed in school. FRCs provide a broad array of educational strategies, including tutoring sessions, summer learning experiences, after-school programs, and volunteer mentors to assist all students in a school.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Henry County** set a goal to increase academic performance by 50 percent for students referred through case management. By the third quarter, 70 percent had improved grades and 77 percent had improved attendance compared to the first quarter.
- **Jackson County** improved graduation rates from 92 percent to 95 percent in a single year through increased family outreach.

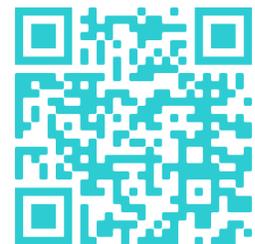
Story From the Field: Shelby County Schools

A literacy program was developed in partnership with Novel bookstore for approximately 600 fourth and fifth grade students. Each student was provided a copy of “Clean Getaway” by New York Times bestselling author, Nic Stone, to add to their home libraries. The novel takes place on an unplanned road trip through the American South with the protagonist’s grandmother and invites readers to “take a trip with an eleven-year-old boy who is about to discover that the world hasn’t always been a welcoming place for kids like him.”



Photo provided by Shelby County Schools FRC

Watch a video here:



A Look Ahead: A Note from the State Coordinator

For nearly 30 years, Tennessee’s Family Resource Centers have served school districts and communities as a hub for a myriad of social service and mental health supports. Tennessee’s 102 FRCs have remained steadfast in their commitment to eliminate the barriers hindering family and student success no matter the circumstance – crisis, house fire, extended school closure, or homelessness. It brings immense pride to celebrate and reveal Tennessee’s Best Kept Secret: Family Resource Centers.

Looking ahead, the department is committed to facilitating ways to Engage, Empower, and Evolve our FRCs. Over the 2020–2021 school year, we will utilize a statewide FRC Advisory Council to complete a mandated review of the state’s guidelines for FRCs. Input from this cross-collaborative group of FRC directors, community stakeholders, and agency partners will ensure our guidelines are up to date while utilizing our “Three E” pillars.

We will identify barriers and pull out the strengths of Tennesseans who have always shown a “can do and get to” attitude when it comes to delivering for students and families. Leveraging our strengths, reducing barriers, and highlighting measurable impacts to share across the state will help FRCs gain the knowledge, build the skills, and form the mindsets in their communities about the importance of FRCs.

With gratitude,



Taylor Rayfield | State Coordinator, Family Resource Centers
Tennessee Department of Education
Division of Whole Child Supports



Engage schools and community stakeholders to identify barriers hindering the social, personal, physical, and academic well-being of students.



Empower students and families by providing high-quality services.



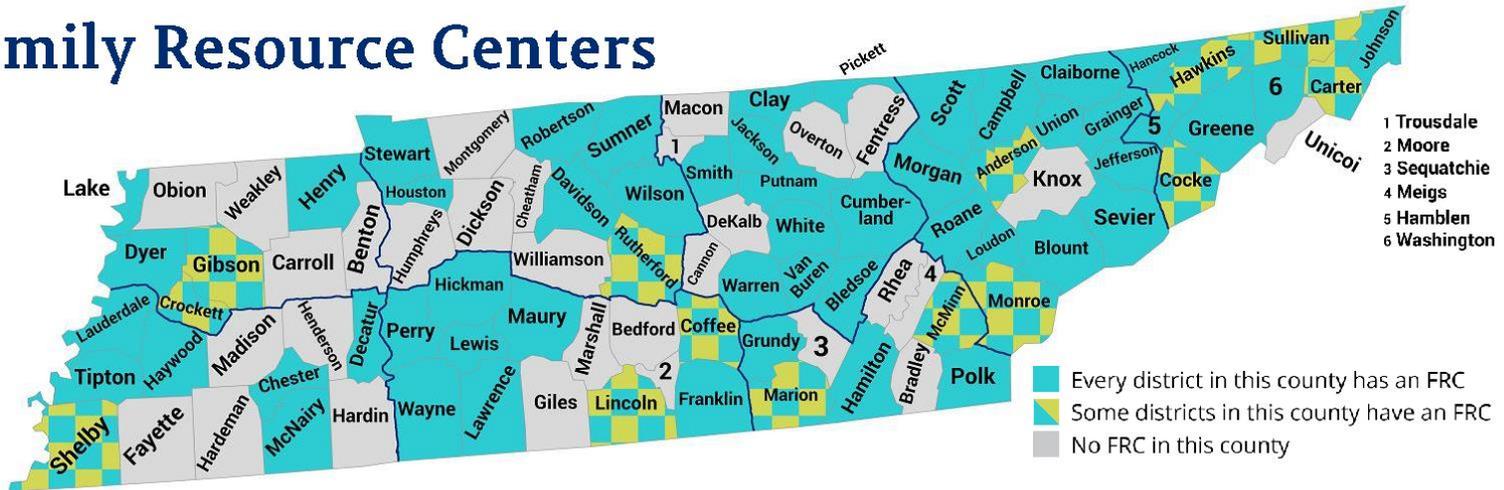
Evolve as leaders in districts serving as a hub of effective social service and mental health supports.

Appendix A: Family Resource Centers

To find the **most up-to-date directory of all 102 Family Resource Center Directors across the state of Tennessee**, please click [here](#) or visit the Family Resource Center webpage on the Tennessee Department of Education website.

Appendix B: FRC Location Map

Family Resource Centers



Northwest

- Crockett Co.
- Dyer Co.
- Dyersburg City (Dyer)
- Henry Co.
- Humboldt City (Gibson)
- Lake Co.
- Paris SSD (Henry)
- Trenton SSD (Gibson)

Southwest

- Chester Co.
- Decatur Co.
- Haywood Co.
- Lauderdale Co.
- McNairy Co.
- Millington Municipal (Shelby)
- Shelby Co.
- Tipton Co.

Mid Cumberland

- Houston Co.
- Lebanon SSD (Wilson)
- Metro-Nashville (Davidson)
- Murfreesboro City (Rutherford)
- Robertson Co.
- Stewart Co.
- Sumner Co.
- Wilson Co.

South Central

- Coffee Co.
- Franklin Co.
- Hickman Co.
- Lawrence Co.
- Lewis Co.
- Lincoln Co.
- Manchester City (Coffee)
- Maury Co.
- Perry Co.
- Wayne Co.

Upper Cumberland

- Bledsoe Co.
- Clay Co.
- Cumberland Co.
- Jackson Co.
- Pickett Co.
- Putnam Co.
- Smith Co.
- Van Buren Co.
- Warren Co.
- White Co.

Southeast

- Athens City (McMinn)
- Grundy Co.
- Hamilton Co.
- Polk Co.
- Richard City (Marion)

East TN

- Alcoa City (Blount)
- Anderson Co.
- Blount Co.
- Campbell Co.
- Claiborne Co.
- Grainger Co.
- Jefferson Co.
- Lenoir City (Loudon)
- Loudon Co.
- Maryville City (Blount)
- Monroe Co.
- Morgan Co.
- Oak Ridge City (Anderson)
- Oneida SSD (Scott)
- Roane Co.
- Scott Co.
- Sevier Co.
- Union Co.

First TN

- Bristol City (Sullivan)
- Carter Co.
- Cocke Co.
- Greene Co.
- Greenville City (Greene)
- Hamblen Co.
- Hancock Co.
- Hawkins Co.
- Johnson City (Washington)
- Johnson Co.
- Kingsport City (Sullivan)
- Washington Co.



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